FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Duluth Sister Cities International Contacts:
Katherine LaFleur, Director of Operations
218.727.8375 (office)
218.348.5349 (cell)
dsci@duluthmnsistercities.org

DULUTH STUDENTS DEPART TUESDAY MORNING FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGE WITH ISUMI-CITY, JAPAN

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Tomorrow morning at 5:25AM, a delegation of nine area students and three chaperones from Duluth will begin the long journey to their destination in Chiba prefecture on the Bōsō Peninsula of Japan. Part of an annual student exchange, the delegation will arrive in Tokyo’s Haneda airport around midday Wednesday and then bus the remaining distance to Duluth’s sister city of Isumi-City, Japan.

During the week-long visit the Duluth delegates will stay with Japanese students and their families; some of whom they’ve already met last August during a “host year”. In addition to meeting the Mayor of Isumi-City, Duluth students will visit Sensō-ji temple, engage in origami and calligraphy classes at the Ohara Cultural Center, and will be able to try on samurai armor and traditional kimonos at Otaki Castle. Breaking up the busy schedule, there is also plenty of time set aside for bonding with host families and experiencing daily life in Japan.

As interest in the exchange spreads, Duluth Sister Cities International (DSCI) has begun working to create a scholarship fund for area students in an effort to make the exchange more accessible for any and all who wish to participate in the program. Those efforts continue, as the nonprofit organization works to fortify the fund and sustain scholarship opportunities. At this time, financial assistance is available and there are multiple opportunities for students to fundraise through bagging groceries, volunteering, and more.

Duluth’s sister city agreement was originally declared in 1990 with Ohara-town (Ohara-machi), which was merged with two other towns (Misaki-machi and Isumi-machi) in 2005 to create what is now recognized as Isumi-City (Isumi-shi). The DSCI youth exchange with Ohara began in 1991, when a group of Japanese students came to Duluth. The first delegation of Duluth-area students left the next year, visiting in the summer of 1992 and included students from Duluth, Scanlon, and Cloquet. The focus of the exchange has always been to bridge language barriers and build cross-cultural understanding through an immersive experience. We honor the relationship and history shared with Ohara-town while celebrating the continued collaboration with Isumi-City.

Duluth’s four other sister cities are: Petrozavodsk, Russia; Växjö, Sweden; Thunder Bay, Canada; and Rania, Iraqi-Kurdistan.

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301 W. 1st St., Suite 308 Duluth, MN 55802 Phone 218-727-8375 www.duluthmnsistercities.org